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# From Private Devotion to Universal Phenomenon: The Way of Saint James in Spain, the case of Navarra

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This article analyses the process leading to the restoring, revitalisation and consolidation of the Way of Saint James in Spain in recent decades, and its conversion from a merely private and residual pilgrimage route of just several hundred individuals, into an important cultural and spiritual reality having a worldwide impact. The region of Navarra is used to highlight typical places of interest located on the Way of Saint James, and as an example of an experience that can be extrapolated and exported, of the activities, projects, events, decisions and actions undertaken in a huge collaborative effort that has given rise to the present-day successful reality of the Pilgrim Road in Spain.

**Key Words:** Way of Saint James, Pilgrimage, Camino, Santiago, Compostela, Jacobean, Navarra, historical development

## Introduction

The Way of Saint James, also referred to as the Pilgrim Road to Compostela, the *Camino de Santiago* or simply the Way or the *Camino*, originates at *Tour Saint Jacques* under the shadow of the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris.<sup>[1]</sup> The old pilgrimage route, dating to the Middle Ages, extends in several branches through France, towards the southwest and the Spanish border, which it crosses as two separate sub-branches in adjacent regions, Aragón and Navarra, and then continues westward another 750 kilometres across northern Spain, once more as just one road. The final destination is the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, in Galicia, where the tomb of the Apostle Saint James is located.

The region of Navarra is strategically located on the Way of Saint James, with two major branches of the Pilgrim Road passing through its territory.<sup>[2]</sup> This region plays a pivotal role within the historical and present-day framework of the Camino, alongside the other regions directly or indirectly affected by it.<sup>[3]</sup> The

Pilgrim Road is now a flourishing and consolidated pilgrimage route providing a modern and diversified set of infrastructures that serves as the physical support for a multiplicity of specialised services and an equal number of cultural events and social activities catering to the tens of thousands of pilgrims coming from all over the world to visit Santiago de Compostela every year.

## Navarra

The region of Navarra, one of the seventeen semi-autonomous administrative entities in Spain, the official name of which is *Comunidad Foral de Navarra*,<sup>[4]</sup> is a prosperous territory occupying slightly

1. It is therefore not surprising that the first association created to restore and revitalise the Pilgrim Road should have been founded in Paris, in 1950: *Société Française des Amis du Chemin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle*, promoted by René de la Coste, Louis Bourdon and others.
2. The branch of the Camino from Yesa to Puente la Reina covers 70 kilometres; the other branch, from Roncesvalles to Viana, covers 150 kilometres, for a total of 220 kilometres of Pilgrim Road in Navarra.

3. Aragón, La Rioja, Castilla-León and Galicia in the first case, and País Vasco (Basque Country), Cantabria and Asturias in the second instance. Among other branches of the Camino in the Iberian Peninsula, the increasingly important Portuguese Road (*Camino Central Português*) starts in Lisbon, and the *Ruta de la Plata*, also a popular and much travelled road, sets out from Sevilla (Andalucía).
4. The adjective “*Foral*” refers to a set of old laws and privileges, the *Fueros*, that this region retains and has updated from its earlier days as a Medieval kingdom, the *Reyno de Navarra*. This unique legislative and juridical configuration is of special relevance in the context of the pilgrimage: the regional government has legal powers to act in a relatively independent manner. Specifically, Navarra is largely in control of the financial jurisdiction, and thus has more freedom to legislate and dictate in a subsidiary manner, as compared to the other regions of Spain. This has largely facilitated and strengthened collaboration between the political establishment, the cultural and the religious realms, and civil society.

### Monasterio de Leyre



(monasteriodeleyre.com)

over 10,000 square kilometres located in the extreme northern reaches of Spain. It is surrounded on three sides by the Basque Country, La Rioja and Aragón, and on its northern fringe, it shares 163 kilometres of common border with France - Pyrénées Atlantiques, a Department pertaining to the region of Nouvelle Aquitaine. Navarra is subdivided in three distinct zones, *Montaña*, *Zona Media* and *Ribera*, which represent the region's three zones, possess quite differentiated geographical / physical characteristics; in the north the mountains, in the centre flat fields and rolling hills and in the south the Ebro River Valley.<sup>[5]</sup>

The four main branches of the French Road (*Chemin Français de Compostelle*) converge on the southern villages of Ostabat and Oloron, where the Pilgrim Road becomes just two extensions that enter Spain at Valcarlos (Navarra) to the west, and at Somport (Aragón) to the east. The Spanish branch of the Camino from Somport to the Navarra border is known as the Aragonese Road (*Camino aragonés*). It descends from the Pyrenees passing by Canfranc and its famous railway station and through the military town of Jaca,

to become a part of the Navarra Road (*Camino Navarro*) in the proximity of the small village of Yesa.

After skirting a reservoir near this village, the road continues in the direction of Monreal and Noáin, located just south of Pamplona, but there is also the option of detouring towards nearby locations associated with the Way of Saint James that are well worth visiting. On the northern side, located on a mountain slope is a privileged perch from which to contemplate the splendid vista of the reservoir and the mountains: San Salvador de Leyre, a fully operational Benedictine monastery, complete with Gregorian chant, that offers all the services required for pilgrims and other visitors. This abbey, an eclectic architectural blend of Romanesque and Gothic styles, features an original 11<sup>th</sup> Century crypt under the main temple.

On the southern side, again not far from the main route, is the fortified Castle of Javier, dating to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century but extensively renovated, and the birthplace of Navarra's favourite son and Patron, the universally known and venerated missionary, Saint Francis Xavier. Just a few kilometres away is located the small town of Sangüesa (5,000 inhabitants), from where the pilgrim route continues and rejoins the main branch in nearby

5. *Anuario Estadístico*, Gobierno de España, Ministerio del Interior, Madrid, 2016; *Gran Enciclopedia de Navarra*, Fundación Caja Navarra, Pamplona, 1990.



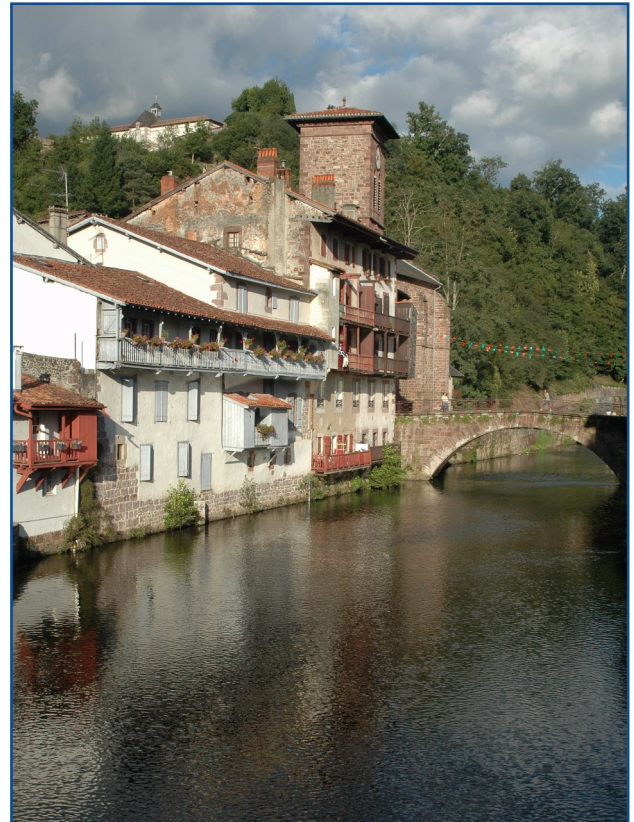
**Church of Santa María la Real, Sangüesa**

([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iglesia\\_de\\_Santa\\_María\\_la\\_Real\\_de\\_Sangüesa.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Iglesia_de_Santa_María_la_Real_de_Sangüesa.jpg))

Liédena. Among the many attractions of this old town, the most outstanding monument is the church of Santa María la Real, a 12<sup>th</sup> Century Romanesque temple transitioning to Gothic, with an octagonal campanile and an elaborate portico.

The main route continues towards Pamplona without entering in the city; rather, it turns south at Noáin, a suburb of the capital city, noted for its majestic 18<sup>th</sup> Century aqueduct. The next important stop is Santa María de Eunate, a small and mysterious octagonal Romanesque church dedicated to Our Lady, erected around the 12<sup>th</sup> Century. One of the main ingredients of this mystery is the very location of this most original temple, standing isolated in the middle of a field, and whose initial function is unknown, as is its origin, commonly attributed to the Knights Templar.

Further west, on the outskirts of Puente la Reina, there stands a life-sized metal statue of a rather jolly Saint James, dressed in pilgrim garb as he is usually depicted, next to a hotel aptly named *El Peregrino*. This statue marks the exact spot where the two separate branches of the pilgrim route in Navarra starting in the

**Saint Jean Pied de Port**

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint\\_Jean\\_Pied\\_de\\_Port\\_Pont\\_Romain.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Saint_Jean_Pied_de_Port_Pont_Romain.jpg)

north and east come together and once more ‘*become just one road*’ until its final destination, as is proclaimed in the inscription on the pedestal of this quaint and charming little monument.

The other pilgrim extension entering Navarra on its northern border as the continuation of the French Road coming from Paris and subsequently converging on Ostabat, has as a frequent starting point, for many pilgrims, the beautiful little French border town of Saint Jean Pied de Port,<sup>[6]</sup> located on the Nive River. Nearby, on the Spanish side, the tiny hamlet of Valcarlos announces the long steep climb over the Pyrenees leading to one of the most important

6. The French Word “*port*” does not refer exclusively to a seaport, but –the same as “*puerto*”, its correlative equivalent in Spanish- it is also used to denote a mountain pass. In this particular case, it is the pass at *Ibañeta*, between Valcarlos and Roncesvalles on the Spanish side, whose altitude of 1,057 metres is the greatest hurdle the pilgrims will have to face in the entire Camino, having to climb over the Pyrenees from an altitude of under 200 metres in Saint Jean Pied de Port or Valcarlos. Many pilgrims claim that the most arduous and daunting stage of the entire Camino is the very first one.

pilgrimage stops along the Camino in Navarra, and indeed in all of Spain: the historic site of Roncesvalles (also known and often referred to by its French name, *Roncesvaux*), where the famous Battle of Roncesvalles took place in the year 778 between the local *Vascones* and the rearguard of the Army of Charlemagne,<sup>[7]</sup> commemorated in the epic poem *La Chanson de Roland* (The Song of Roland).<sup>[8]</sup> Many attractions in Roncesvalles, however, are not associated with the historic battle, but rather with an ensemble of impressive buildings related to the Pilgrim Road: *posada* (inn), *albergue* (hostel), 12<sup>th</sup> Century chapel of Sancti Spiritus, tiny 13<sup>th</sup> Century church of Santiago de los Peregrinos, museum and library. The most imposing building on the site is the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Collegiate Church of Santa María, a fine example of very early Gothic architecture, and one of the major focal points of the entire Camino.<sup>[9]</sup>

Not far away, two exceedingly beautiful villages, Burguete and Espinal, both displaying an urban pattern typical of settlements along the Camino - one main thoroughfare crossing the middle section, with long parallel side streets and short perpendicular alleys - are located at the onset of a still arduous but relatively accessible expanse of 50 kilometres over mountain passes that reaches the villages of Zubiri and Larrasoña at the base of the foothills of the Pyrenees, and eventually crosses the Ulzama River in Arre, near Pamplona, over a stone bridge dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup>

7. The Army, returning home from liberating the besieged city of Zaragoza from the Moors, was commanded by Roland, the Prefect of the Marche of Brittany and the Emperor's nephew. It was defeated, and Roland was killed in the battle. The epic poem explains the attraction of Roncesvalles as a popular destination for Spain's northern neighbors, who come in great numbers to pay their respects to their fallen hero in the place where -as a nearby monolith proclaims- the local hordes had inflicted "an affront on the French nation".
8. *The Song of Roland* is a largely non-historical exaltation of the battle that portrays the Franks fighting the Moors. Although this is mostly a fictional account, the Moorish presence in Spain during seven centuries, between 711 (invasion and *conquista*) and 1492 (*reconquista* and expulsion) is related to the early history of the Camino. Among the many legends and images associated with the pilgrimage is that of "Saint James the Moor-slayer" - *Santiago Matamoros*- which has its origin in the supposed divine intervention of the Saint in the Christian victory over the Saracens at the Battle of Clavijo (La Rioja) in the year 844.
9. The great international projection of the monumental ensemble of Roncesvalles, listed as a Place of Cultural Interest regulated by the *Patrimonio Histórico Español*, created by the Spanish Ministry of Culture in 1985, is one of the important factors for the present-day surge of the Camino.

**Trinidad de Arre (Bridge over the Ulzama River in Arre)**



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trinidad\\_de\\_Arre\\_\(54784850\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Trinidad_de_Arre_(54784850).jpg)

Century, next to a popular hostel attached onto the small 13<sup>th</sup> Century basilica of Santísima Trinidad.

The Metropolitan Area of Pamplona, the next major stop, is the only large urban settlement in the entire territory; its 330,000 inhabitants account for approximately half the population of the entire region. This metropolis was an important town in the Medieval times, and even earlier, and continues to play an active role in the projects and events relating to the Way of Saint James. This city with over two thousand years of existence offers a complete and diversified range of installations and services, and many valuable historical monuments. Standing out is the Metropolitan Cathedral of Santa María la Real, a large church with a beautiful sober interior and a magnificent cloister, both of Gothic style, hidden behind the cathedral's rather uninspiring 18<sup>th</sup> Century neoclassical façade.

Many early risers (and pilgrims are by nature early risers), even those spending the night as far away as Arre or Larrasoña, bypass and forego Pamplona altogether, or invest little time there, in spite of its multiplicity of interesting attractions, and continue towards the two hostels located in Cizur Menor, an exquisitely maintained hamlet situated just a few kilometres from the capital, at the foot of the mountain range of El Perdón.

This sierra, with an altitude of 1,039 metres, is the last major obstacle until the high ground of Galicia, still many days away.<sup>[10]</sup> Fortunately for the pilgrims, the mountain pass which they have to overcome is situated at an altitude of 770 metres. From this vantage point a



breathtaking view is beheld of the Middle Zone of Navarra, whose low, gentle rolling hills and yellow cultivated fields sharply contrast with the rugged peaks and the deep green valleys of the Mountain Zone. An added enticement is the gradual transitioning from Oceanic climate to Mediterranean climate, as a prelude announcing warmer days and much less rain, although soon the pilgrims will be facing the challenges posed by the high temperatures of the elevated and flat Castilian *Meseta*.

Next stop is the town of Obanos, located just a few minutes' walk from the church of Eunete and the intersection where the two branches of the Camino coming from the French Road join together to 'become one' near the already mentioned statue of an endearing Saint James. This pretty and orderly village is the venue for a celebrated and well attended amateur pageant play staged on the main plaza, featuring the local residents, the *Misterio de Obanos*, an outdoor theatrical representation classified as being of National Interest and performed biannually since 1965.<sup>[11]</sup>

Just a few kilometres away is situated one of the major locations on the entire Camino: Puente la Reina. The 12<sup>th</sup> Century churches of the Crucifix and Santiago el Mayor are the two main temples in this locality, but the most impressive structure in this small town (2,800 inhabitants) is the magnificent 11<sup>th</sup> Century bridge over the Arga River which gives the town its name, a very rare example of Romanesque engineering proudly and stoically standing for over one thousand years. Saint Francis of Assisi, the first 'promoter' of the Camino de Santiago,<sup>[12]</sup> may in fact have been one of the millions of pilgrims who, over the centuries, have trodden on the foot-worn flat stones of this emblematic bridge.

10. Walking the approximately 700 kilometres between Roncesvalles and Santiago, depending on the daily distance covered (usually 15 to 30 kilometres), and on each individual's stamina or particular interests, usually takes between three weeks and a month. The official Camino credential –the *Compostela*– can be obtained even if this distance, or a substantial part of it, is split up in separate sets of stages over a greater period of weeks, months or years.

11. The creator of this theatrical representation was Father Santos Beguiristáin. It is a story of passion and martyrdom involving a French princess, Felicia, and her brother Guillén; the latter, opposed to his sister having left the family homestead in Aquitaine to live a simple and devoted life in a small village in Navarra, murdered her in a fit of rage. Then, on the advice of a good monk, Guillén made the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, repented of his crime, returned to Navarra and spent the rest of his life in prayer and penance, tending to pilgrims, in the small hermitage of Arnotegui, still standing on a hilltop near Obanos and Eunete.

**Puente la Reina-Navarra**



[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puente\\_sobre\\_el\\_Arga\\_\(Puente\\_la\\_Reina-Navarra\).JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Puente_sobre_el_Arga_(Puente_la_Reina-Navarra).JPG)

The Pilgrim Road continues along the main highway, and after crossing the villages of Mañeru, Cirauqui, Lorca and Villatuerta, enters Estella, a beautiful little town on the Ega River and another significant locality in the history the Camino, and a key focal point in the process of restoring and revitalizing the Way of Saint James.<sup>[13]</sup> This small bustling town (13,000 inhabitants) abounds with religious and civil monuments, among others, the churches of San Miguel, Santo Sepulcro and San Pedro de la Rúa,<sup>[14]</sup> the basilica of Nuestra Señora del Puy, the Palace of the Kings of Navarra, a rare example of Romanesque civil architecture, and the Monastery of Irache, an extensively rebuilt abbey on the outskirts of the town.

12. The history of the Camino is full of legends and myths, and stories abound about extraordinary events and miracles – mostly, but not exclusively, of a spiritual nature – that have little or no bearing on reality. But there is also much documented history, such as that pertaining to Saint Francis of Assisi, who according to some accounts, came to Spain in 1213 as "*Franciscus penitens*", preaching and promoting the pilgrim route, and arriving in Santiago de Compostela in 1215.

13. The relevance of Estella in the context of the Camino can be appreciated by the fact that the name of the town derives from the Latin "*stellae*" (stars), a symbol of the Camino that finds its origin in the mysterious lights that appeared in the "*campus stellae*", the "field of lights" or *campo de estrellas* which accounts for the name Compostela.

14. The word "*rúa*" is a Medieval term that derives from the French word "*rue*", which stands for "street". It is associated with ancient towns, and is often found on the Way of Saint James, although in modern times it has been replaced by the word "*calle*". In this particular instance, the *rúa* associated with the church of San Pedro is a direct reference to the Camino, which lies at the bottom of the hill on which this church is erected.

Further south, the large village of Los Arcos and the tiny hamlet of Torres del Río, where another interesting and intriguing octagonal church allegedly originating with the Templars is situated, are located on the stretch of pilgrim route that straddles the main highway as far as Viana, a busy little town (4,100 inhabitants) squatting on top of a fortified knoll. Its major monument is the 13<sup>th</sup> Century Gothic church of Santa María,<sup>[15]</sup> the most important temple in this locality and the last stop of the Camino in Navarra. The Way of Saint James then departs Navarra to enter the region of La Rioja in Logroño, on the other side of the Ebro River, and continues westward towards the dry, flat expanses of the *Meseta*.<sup>[16]</sup>

### Takeoff

The Way of Saint James was placed on the list of the *Artistic and Historical Heritage of Spain* by means of a Decree on 5 September 1962. That Decree also created the *Patronato del Camino de Santiago*, a governing body which in the early years did not carry out much activity; in those years, the Pilgrim Road was merely an anecdote, with only a few hundred pilgrims making their way to the Apostle's Tomb as a purely personal devotion, using their own means without any substantial physical infrastructure or institutional support. This Decree was proclaimed almost twenty years before the creation of the *Consejo Jacobeo* (Jacobean Council),<sup>[17]</sup> which was also largely inactive until more recent times. In Navarra and in some of the other provinces, patronages for the *Camino* were also created at that time, enabling the different public administrations to operate in a coordinated manner with the aim of restoring and renovating the Pilgrim Road.

The year 1965 was declared Jacobean Holy Year (*Año Santo Jacobeo*);<sup>[18]</sup> this served as a good rallying moment for Church and State officials who were interested in providing greater relevance and resonance to the pilgrimage, in a country undergoing rapid and radical changes in both the ecclesiastical and political spheres at that moment: the reforms of the Second

Vatican Council and the process of Economic Development.

In the case of the Church, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela was already promoting the Way of Saint James under the leadership of the Cardinal-Archbishop, Monsignor Fernando Quiroga Palacios. Later on, this activity was intensified by his successors, the future Cardinals Ángel Suquía Goicoechea and Antonio María Rouco Varela. In the case of the State, within the framework of an ambitious program aimed at stimulating economic growth, the Spanish Government carried out a vast and highly successful promotional campaign to activate and expand tourism in Spain.<sup>[19]</sup>

This campaign addressed the high potential of the country in the tourist sector, which was already being perceived as a highly lucrative economic prospect, and which eventually would evolve into Spain's main industry. It was only logical that the Way of Saint James should be considered an important element among the many attractive features the country could offer to its future visitors, and from that moment onward, the Camino was promoted to a higher degree by the Spanish Government.<sup>[20]</sup>

The Jacobean Holy Years of 1971 and 1976 did not have much social repercussion, but they are nevertheless important within a broader context. Academic activities in those years would produce intellectual fruits and facilitate the establishment of focal points of research and study, not only in Spain but also in other European countries, notably in Germany, Italy and France. On a more modest level, the *Semanas Medievales* (Weeks of Medieval Studies), promoted in Estella by José María Lacarra de Miguel and Ángel Martín Duque, were gaining in stature and prestige.

An unprecedented event that took place in Santiago de Compostela in 1982, having a huge impact on public opinion and providing a big boost to the Camino, was the visit of Pope John Paul II. It was on that occasion

15. This church is the final resting place of Navarra's most notorious villain, the adventurous Italian noble and soldier Cesare Borgia, who is related to the ecclesiastical and political history of Navarra, and killed in an ambush near Viana in 1507.

16. *Gran Enciclopedia de Navarra*, op cit. See also: Alban d'Entremont, "El Camino de Santiago en Navarra", *Estafeta Jacobea*, n° 78, Año XIII, Pamplona, November 2005.

17. Created by the Spanish Government by Royal Decree on 18 October 1991.

18. The Jacobean Holy Year (*Año Santo Jacobeo* in Galician) is proclaimed every time July 25<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of Saint James, Patron Saint of Spain, falls on a Sunday.

19. It was in the context of this campaign that the original and catchy slogan, which became famous worldwide, was coined: "*Spain is different*".

20. In this promotion, the Minister of Information and Tourism, Manuel Fraga Iribarne, played a major role. For this reason, the Jacobean family owes him a debt of recognition and gratitude.

that the ‘Pilgrim Pope’ made his famous speech in defence of the Christian identity and roots of Europe, and exhorted the continent to again become ‘a beacon of civilization’:

*I, Bishop of Rome and pastor of the Universal Church, from Santiago issue to you, old Europe, a cry full of love: Find yourself, ... Be yourself. Discover your origins. Give life to your roots. Revive those authentic values that gave glory to your history and enhanced your presence on the other continents. ... You can still be the beacon of civilization and stimulate progress throughout the world ... The other continents watch you and expect from you the same response that Saint James gave to Christ: ‘I can do it’.*<sup>[21]</sup>

With the aim of fostering this spirit of the pilgrimage, of making optimum use of resources and of unifying objectives and initiatives, in 1985 the Archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, Monsignor Rouco Varela, organized the First Jacobean Encounter (*I Encuentro Jacobeo*) in the holy city. The intense days of prayer, reflection and study that marked this Encounter brought together experts, scholars, researchers, clerics and ordinary citizens who studied the fundamental measures that could be taken to revitalise the road leading to the spiritual capital of the Camino, many of which were later implemented.

The person benefitting most from the Encounter was Father Elías Valiña Sampedro, long-serving pastor of the parish of El Cebreiro (Lugo, Galicia), an enthusiastic and passionate devotee and promoter of the Camino, who was chosen as *Comisario* (Commissar)<sup>[22]</sup> of the Camino de Santiago. He was authorised to start setting up the social and institutional framework deemed necessary to increase the specific weight of the Camino outside the strict religious domain, specifically to make it known and appreciated by civil society, the academic world and the public administration. As a historical note, it is interesting to mention that the registered number of pilgrims passing through or initiating their pilgrimage in Roncesvalles in 1985 amounted to only 426 persons. This gives an

indication of the scant impact of the Camino, even twenty years after the huge promotional effort carried out by the Spanish Government in the mid-sixties.

In 1986, Father Valiña began organizing a Second Jacobean Encounter (*II Encuentro Jacobeo*), modelled on the Santiago congress, in the city of Jaca. The means used to communicate ideas, activities and plans was the *Boletín del Camino de Santiago*, a modest publication but nonetheless a valuable instrument for transmitting instructions and news items, ideas and concerns. Father Valiña travelled extensively along the Camino, encouraging and exhorting his collaborators, whom he called ‘the people of the Camino’ (*las gentes del Camino*), to assume their responsibilities and fulfil their promises, to remain in contact and foster ‘a new model of pilgrimage’ which would be a social and cultural experience for the pilgrims, but also an occasion for delving more deeply in their own personal human and spiritual reality (Roszak, 2017).

The top priority at that moment was the erection of hostels along the Camino to lodge the pilgrims, similar to those already existing in Roncesvalles and other places. Father Valiña wrote to the provincial and local Jacobean associations, stressing how the *Amigos del Camino de Santiago* would have to be in charge of giving the Pilgrim Road its major impulse, and be the main protagonists for stimulating and conserving the vitality of the Way of Saint James. Another major concern was that of properly indicating the Camino by means of visible markers, a project in the works or already completed in a number of geographical areas, in Navarra and some other provinces. The need was also expressed for an official *Pilgrim Identification Document* in the form of a little booklet similar to a passport, which would be discussed at the Jaca Encounter, regarding which Father Valiña proposed a set of specific indications and characteristics, which to a large degree were later adopted.

The most urgent task ahead was that of organizing the 1986 Jaca Encounter. This task was entrusted to the different Jacobean associations, in close and frequent collaboration with political entities, cultural organisations, Church authorities and all those interested persons deemed to be useful and capable of helping to move this initiative forward. In Navarra, Father Valiña visited Pamplona some years earlier and insisted on the need to set down in the territory, a clearly identified and visibly marked route, to build *albergues* and to petition and lobby institutions and authorities in the quest for collaboration and assistance. As a result, a group of local residents made the

21. As reported in *The New York Times*, New York, November 10, 1982.

22. The term *Comisario*, in Spanish, denotes a person occupying a particular office or carrying out a specific function at the behest of a higher authority. The transliteration of this word from the Russian language has no bearing on the commonly understood significance of the word “Commissar”, and does not imply the connotations with which it is associated in the political context of the Soviet Union.



commitment to work on the Camino. In 1987 this group founded the *Asociación de Amigos del Camino de Santiago en Navarra*, legally registered in February of 1987.<sup>[23]</sup>

The founders and collaborators of the newly founded Navarra Jacobean Association enthusiastically embarked on an ambitious program of activities, such as the promotion of pilgrims, the signalling of the Camino by means of visibly identified symbols and markers (the star, the shell and the arrow),<sup>[24]</sup> meeting with local and provincial authorities with the aim of procuring or improving infrastructures, promoting the cultural diffusion of the Way of Saint James and preparing suitable accommodation for the pilgrims. They also collaborated in the preparation of the Jaca Encounter, in which eventually there was a large attendance of '*gentes del Camino*' from Navarra, particularly from Pamplona.

These activities are typical of the early stages of the revitalisation of the Camino in Navarra and in other parts of the country. In the history of this revitalisation, Navarra and notably the city of Pamplona, played a leading role, in a joint effort with the other towns and cities on the Way of Saint James. In spite of this leading role, however, it is clear that no region, person, institution or organisation can claim exclusive rights or privileges over the Camino, and the highly positive and encouraging numbers of the present moment are a reflection of the contributions of multiple entities and countless numbers of persons who, in their own respective spheres of activity, generously donated their time and efforts in support of this valued and valuable initiative.

This hidden, unsung dedication - not seeking fame, honours or material benefits - of thousands of citizens who lodged and tended to pilgrims, gave them pertinent information or offered prayers, is a faithful reflection of the spiritual and religious component of the Way of Saint James, and of its authentic spirit. It is the same spirit that had driven those who lived nearby or tread on the sacred stones of the Camino during many centuries. This generous and self-sacrificing spirit, prevalent in the early days of the revitalisation of the Camino, is still very much alive today.

23. The founders of the Navarra Association were Andrés Muñoz Garde – who was chosen as President-, José Luis Los Arcos, Javier Nagore, Fernando Videgaín and Jesús Tanco Lerga, who was appointed Secretary. Other persons of note who greatly contributed to the expansion and consolidation of the Way of Saint James in Navarra are, among many others, Joaquín Mencos, Valentín Redín, Jesús Arraiza and Javier Biurrun.

## Expansion

A meeting of the Council of Europe, held in Santiago de Compostela in 1987 under the leadership of Marcelino Oreja, declared the Way of Saint James to be a '*Cultural Route of the Council of Europe*', a designation that attracted massive public attention. This was complemented by the numerous meetings and encounters organized by recently founded associations<sup>[25]</sup> which began to establish and solidify a proper associative network in conjunction with the Cathedral of Santiago, and to improve the conditions for the accommodation of pilgrims passing through their localities and regions on their way to the Apostle's tomb.

The last year of that decade, 1989, was the occasion of the second visit of Pope John Paul II to Santiago de Compostela for the celebration of the *World Youth Congress*. This visit was even more instrumental than the first in fostering a greater understanding of the pilgrimage and the understanding of the deep implications and the ultimate significance of the Way of Saint James. As he had done seven years before, the Holy Father again pronounced an inspiring homily, this time specifically directed to the young:

*O Mountain of Joy, to which pilgrims have come, you remind us of one of the most beautiful characteristics of Santiago and its roads: universality. I invite all those who travel it to maintain, as you have always done, the bonds of catholicity. You have come here on pilgrimage to the tomb of the Apostle who can confirm at first hand, if we can put it like that, the truth of the vocation of man, whose reference point is Christ. You have come to find your personal vocation. ... May your contemporaries, contemplating your pilgrimage, be able to exclaim: 'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you' (Zech 8: 23). This is the wish of the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, who has participated with you in this pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela'.*<sup>[26]</sup>

24. These markers and symbols are presented in bright yellow, not only as the provision of an unmistakable and highly visible practical reference for the pilgrims, but also in honour of the Papal Colours. In the process of signalling the Camino in Spain, like in so many instances, Navarra played a pioneering role.

25. Such as those set up in Estella (Francisco Beruete), Zaragoza (Alejandro Uli), La Rioja (José Ignacio Díaz), Burgos (Braulio Valdivielso and Pablo Arribas) and Madrid (José Antonio Cimadevila). In a parallel manner, French associations such as those established in Pyrénées Atlantiques (Jacques Rouyre) and in Paris (Jeannine Warcollier), took on a more active role.

In 1993, another Jacobean Holy Year, the Way of Saint James was included in the *World Heritage List* by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Although this was a highly prestigious distinction, its actual impact on the Camino was not especially noted: by the early nineties the Way of Saint James was already evolving in a quite satisfactory manner in all the regions of the country. The Jubilee Year itself, however, had great relevance. As part of the commemorations, the Crown Prince of Spain, Felipe de Borbón, presided over a gathering of authorities in Roncesvalles, and in Pamplona the Sixth Jacobean Week (*VI Semana Jacobea*) was held under the patronage of the city corporation.

Among the many activities carried out in Navarra in a very busy 1994, an outstanding event was the pilgrimage from Pamplona to Eunate, an activity that is still today a popular and well-attended annual celebration. That same year, the London-based Confraternity of the Way of Saint James and the Jacobean association of Pyrénées Atlantiques organised a trek from Bayonne (France) to Pamplona, with closing festivities being held in Olite. The *Asociación de Amigos del Camino en Navarra* also organized a series of walking work stages from León to Santiago, sidetracking northward to Oviedo to carry out signalling and other efforts for the benefit of the Asturias branch of the Camino.

In 1995, representatives of the Navarra Association visited Paderborn (Germany), one of the sister cities of Pamplona, to promote the Way of Saint James, and that same year, the Association was the recipient of the Europe Prize (*Premio Europa*) bestowed by the European Documentation Centre (*Centro de Documentación Europea*) of the University of Navarra, an institution that has supported the Camino from the outset, and whose campus lying on the southern edge of Pamplona is traversed by the Pilgrim Road.

In 1996, the General Jacobean Congress (*Congreso General Jacobeo*) was the central axis of the cultural events taking place in Pamplona that year, under the general heading '*Anden los que saben; sepan los que andan*',<sup>[27]</sup> which underlined the need to bring together the vast cultural and academic spheres and the more personal realm of the pilgrims' own intimate experiences. Also in 1996, pilgrims from Pamplona walked on the Portuguese Road from Porto to Santiago de Compostela. Important activities were equally

26. *Homily of His Holiness John Paul II, Sunday, 20 August 1989*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1989.

**Table 1. Number of Pilgrims passing through Roncesvalles between 1984 and 2004**

Year	Numbers
1984	255
1985	426
1986	1,107
1987	1,423
1988	1,623
1989	4,259
1990	2,710
1991	3,500
1992	4,579
1993	14,662
1994	7,504
1995	8,842
1996	10,630
1997	11,516
1998	14,085
1999	28,238
2000	22,934
2001	26,884
2002	29,284
2003	31,006
2004	40,002

Source: Colegiata de Roncesvalles (Navarra)

carried out a year later, in 1997: a highly successful and multitudinous walking pilgrimage from Pamplona to the Marian Shrine of Lourdes (France), with other Jacobean associations also participating, and the opening of another hostel in Pamplona, which allowed the number of persons lodged in the city's *albergues* to triple, increasing from 1,000 to 3,000 pilgrims between 1996 and 1997.

The year 1999 was again a Jacobean Holy Year. This was the occasion giving rise to a greater volume of pilgrims in Navarra and in Santiago de Compostela. A

27. This ingenious slogan – "*Walk, those who know; know, those who walk*" – is also the title of the book of Proceedings of this Congress, edited by Jesús Tanco Lerga and published in Pamplona in 1996.

commemorative event, presided by Princess Elena of Spain, was held in Roncesvalles with local and regional authorities. Later, in 2000, a new hostel in Pamplona was added to the those already existing in the city and in its surrounding localities such as Arre and Cizur Menor; from that moment, the need for pilgrim lodging was being met to a large degree in the Pamplona area, and in Navarra as a whole, where the number of pilgrims was fast growing and would continue to grow in the coming years (Table 1).

In the first decade of the present Century, activities such as these and many others were intensified in Navarra, where the Camino was by then firmly established, thanks to close collaboration between the private sector and the public administration. These endeavours highlight outstanding and extraordinary events, but the daily activities of the administrators and volunteers operating in Navarra and the other regions of Spain were and continue to be more prosaic, but also more important: handing out credentials, encouraging the pilgrims to undertake the journey in the proper conditions, managing the hostels, organising events, publishing and distributing materials, seeking visibility and new members, soliciting funds, organising, accommodating, informing, accompanying, listening, learning.

The year 2010 was again a Jacobean Holy Year, and the highlight was the third visit of Pope Benedict XVI to Spain.<sup>[28]</sup> In Santiago, the Holy Father underlined the spiritual dimension of the Way of Saint James, as his predecessor had done before on two occasions:

*I have come as a pilgrim in this Holy Year of Compostela and I bring in my heart the same love of Christ which led the Apostle Paul to embark upon his journeys, with a desire also to come to Spain (cf. Rom 15: 22-29). I wish to join the great host of men and women who down the centuries have come to Compostela from every corner of this peninsula, from throughout Europe and indeed the whole world, in order to kneel at the feet of Saint James and be transformed by the witness of his faith. They, at every step and filled with hope, created a pathway of culture, prayer, mercy and*

*conversion, which took shape in churches and hospitals, in inns, bridges and monasteries. In this way, Spain and Europe developed a spiritual physiognomy marked indelibly by the Gospel.*<sup>[29]</sup>

*The fatigue of the journey, the variety of landscapes, their encounter with peoples of other nationalities – all of this opens their heart to what is the deepest and most common bond that unites us as human beings: we are in quest, we need truth and beauty, we need an experience of grace, charity, peace, forgiveness and redemption. And in the depth of each of us there resounds the presence of God and the working of the Holy Spirit. Yes, to everyone who seeks inner silence, who keeps passions, desires and immediate occupations at a distance, to the one who prays, God grants the light to find him and to acknowledge Christ. Deep down, all those who come on pilgrimage to Santiago do so in order to encounter God who, reflected in the majesty of Christ, welcomes and blesses them as they reach the Pórtico de la Gloria.*<sup>[30]</sup>

## Consolidation

The contribution of the Church has been of the utmost importance throughout the entire revitalisation process of the Camino, from the high authorities and prelates to the most modest pilgrims and volunteers. But inasmuch as the Way of Saint James is essentially and primordially a religious phenomenon, the collaboration and support of civil society and the political establishment is also a major necessity. In this respect, Navarra can again serve as a model of the collaboration and goodwill that has reaped such copious fruit.<sup>[31]</sup>

The exponential growth in the number of pilgrims passing through Navarra on their way to Santiago de Compostela is continuing at a steady rate. This can be attributed, to a certain degree and as is to be expected, to the impact of television and the diffusion of written publications, to media productions such as documentary films or full-length movies<sup>[32]</sup> that

28. The Pontiff's visit, his third to Spain in his brief Pontificate, lasted only 24 hours, Santiago being one of the two cities he visited, the other being Barcelona, where the Holy Father blessed and dedicated the iconic basilica of *La Sagrada Familia*.

29. *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI in Santiago de Compostela*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2010.

30. As reported in *The Catholic Herald*, London, 7 November 2010.

31. An example of collaboration in this region was the negotiation between the public authorities and land owners, whose forests and fields were being traversed by the traditional route that was being restored. This led to expropriations and the provision of a three-metre wide pilgrim path, with an allowance of 25 metres on both sides, in those places where the Camino does not follow the main roads and impinges on private property.



**Table 2. Number of Compostelas issued between 1993 and 2018 (selected years)**

Year	Number of Compostelas
1993	99,436
1999	154,613
2004	179,891
2010	272,417
2011	183,378
2012	192,458
2013	215,879
2014	237,882
2015	262,447
2016	277,854
2017	301,036

*Source:* Oficina de Peregrinación de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela

highlight the Way of Saint James -and, of course to the advent of Internet. Also, the Camino is faithfully and regularly present at academic and social gatherings, and at business forums and promotional exhibitions, such as *FITUR*, the prestigious international fair on tourism held annually in Madrid, where the Way of Saint James stand receives thousands of visits.

However true it may be that the major events and developments marking the recent history of the Way of Saint James have undoubtedly served to restore, enhance, foster, promote and consolidate the Camino, the most efficient means of spreading the good news about the Way of Saint James continues to be, as it has been for centuries, the personal testimonies and first-hand accounts of those who have gone on the pilgrimage, and who have been 'touched' by it. In a day and age in which social media networks play such an important role, it is ironic that the traditional means of sharing and spreading information by simple word of mouth is of such great relevance. This has been verified many times over in the long history of the Camino, as another unique feature of this magical and timeless road.

32. A still recent example is the 2010 Hollywood movie *The Way*, produced by Filmax Entertainment, starring Martin Sheen, with Emilio Estévez as Director. The film is a reasonable depiction of the Way of Saint James which offers candid glimpses of the interesting people and places that distinguish the Camino, and opens a window on the magnificent scenery and on the art and the architectural treasures found all along the Pilgrim Road.

**Table 3. Origin of foreign pilgrims in 2017 (selected countries)**

Country	Numbers
Italy	27,073
Germany	23,227
USA	17,522
Portugal	12,940
France	8,835
Korea	5,106
Poland	5,072
Australia	4,890
Mexico	3,111
Argentina	2,617
Japan	1,474
China	1,045

*Source:* Oficina de Peregrinación de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela

We are at present experiencing an important increase in the number of pilgrims, and this gives the feeling that all the years are equal, and that all the years are Holy Years. This is reflected in the significant data, such as the information on the number of *Compostelas* <sup>[33]</sup> issued by the Pilgrimage Office of the Cathedral of Santiago to those itinerants who successfully culminate the pilgrimage journey (Table 2). The number of pilgrims continues to increase: in 2018, the Compostela Pilgrimage Office reported that already by mid-October, over 300,000 visitors had received their official pilgrim accreditation.

Concerning the origins of the pilgrims, apart from a majority contribution from Spain, a small group of countries accounts for almost forty percent of the overall total of those making the pilgrimage all the way to Santiago (Table 3).<sup>[34]</sup> In addition to the United States, pilgrims also come in respectable numbers from

33. The *Compostela* is the official diploma issued by the Pilgrimage Office of the Cathedral of Santiago, wherein it is certified that the pilgrim has successfully completed the full length or a major part of the Camino, or in the least of instances, walked it for 100 kilometres, or done 200 kilometres by bicycle. Proof of any of these achievements has to be provided by showing the Pilgrim's Booklet – the Pilgrim Identification Document which Elías Valiña envisaged many years ago – stamped with the seal of all or most of the localities they have passed through in the different stages along the Pilgrim Road.

faraway overseas nations such as Canada and New Zealand, and from other Western European countries such as the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Switzerland and the Netherlands, and to a lesser degree, from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. The Latin American region, except for the countries listed and Brazil, are less represented, although significant numbers are also registered from that part of the world. The numbers of pilgrims coming from the African continent or from Asia, apart from those listed and the Philippines, or from the Arab countries and the Muslim sphere in general, are much more modest.

Pilgrims completing the Camino by bicycle – around 20,000 annually – has dropped slightly in recent years, as has the incidence of more extravagant means of pilgrimage such as coming on horseback or with carts drawn by horses, mules or donkeys, which nonetheless can still occasionally be seen on the Camino. Persons coming by motor vehicles do not count as pilgrims, but buses or minivans used as logistic support for those making the pilgrimage on foot or by bicycle are a frequent sight along the Pilgrim Road, and are not only accepted, but often a necessity.

Regarding the economic benefits generated by the Camino de Santiago, it is estimated that in 2017, 300 million Euros is the approximate sum that the pilgrims and other visitors contributed to the villages, towns and cities along the Pilgrim Road. Apart from the economic benefits, the expansion and consolidation of the Way of Saint James has also brought about the erection or renovation of important infrastructure and buildings, the provision of multiple services and the celebration of major events which have borne the fruit of an exponential growth of pilgrims who each year embark on the pilgrimage journey. Therefore, the benefits of the Pilgrim Road do not touch exclusively on the cultural and religious spheres, but also spill over into the realms of economics, leisure and tourism.

The Spanish and Navarra experiences are examples of what can be achieved when all segments of society – individuals, families, clerics, politicians, entrepreneurs – come together in a common cause. These experiences can serve as a model and a guide that can be extrapolated and exported to regions in Europe which have the aim of reviving the Way of Saint James in their respective territories, and of converting it into a thriving and living reality, as it is today in Navarra and in the other affected regions of Spain, and in France and Portugal.

The important role played by the Way of Saint James in bringing together the academic and cultural world and the private sphere of each pilgrim's vital experience, is an essential feature on the Pilgrim Road. It is also important to remember that the Camino is the material ground upon which, at the present moment, tens of thousands of pilgrims come to visit every year. But it is more important to consider that the Camino is, first and foremost, an efficacious means and a powerful vehicle for spiritual growth and renewal (Huzarek, 2014).

The crucial matter, in the ultimate instance, is not the encouraging numbers that reflect an exponential increase in the number of pilgrims, nor the financial benefits, as if statistical data and economic records could adequately address the real meaning of the Camino. The crucial matter is not the contribution the pilgrims make to the Camino, but the contribution the Camino makes to them. Personal renovation is the essential gift bestowed by the Way of Saint James upon those who walk on its pathways: interior silence and peace, serene transformation and growth, which are experienced by those who tread on this age-long and ageless pilgrim route (Oleksowicz, 2018).

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34. The exponential growth of pilgrims from Korea, whose numbers climbed from only 18 persons from that country passing through Roncesvalles as recent as 15 years ago, to over 5,000 pilgrims overall reaching Santiago at present, is a fascinating feature of the present-day reality of the Camino. This popularity is attributed, among other things, to the visibility of the Way of Saint James on television and other social media, including a widely viewed reality show, and to the writings of Kim Hyo Sun, whose best-selling books and numerous articles on the Camino have received wide publicity in that country. The returning pilgrims have also been instrumental in this exceptional growth by relaying their own personal experiences.

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